

THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH:  
ACKNOWLEDGING AND APPLYING THE GIFTS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AS A  
NEW MISSION PARADIGM IN ZAMBIA

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## ABSTRACT

### THE HOLY SPIRIT UPON ALL FLESH: ACKNOWLEDGING AND APPLYING THE GIFTS OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH AS A NEW MISSION PARADIGM IN ZAMBIA

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While we can celebrate the progress being made in advancing the cause of women in society, there is still much work to be done. The place where least progress has been made in this regard is the Church. Spurred by watching my Mother's spiritual gifts underutilized by the Church because of her gender, I set out to write this project with the hopes of awakening some Church leaders to the loss of vitality as a result. To achieve that I have identified some key elements to women's inequality in the Church in Zambia. One is selective application of Scriptures intended to support men's superiority over women. 1 Corinthians 14:33-36, for example, is one tool in the toolbox of gender inequality in the Church. Sadly, the general context in which Paul commanded that women be quiet in the assembly as reflected in this text is not understood. I have argued that those who seek to make doctrine out of a onetime disciplinary event do so for self-aggrandizement. With it, they forever ensure that ecclesiastical power remains firmly in the hands of men. Another element is the general cultural and traditional view of women and their role in society. This was affirmed by the first missionaries whose doctrine supported strict views of the Church concerning women. I have argued against this by enlisting allies and stakeholders to join the cause of acknowledging and fully applying the gifts of women in the Church. We are doing this because God promised the Holy Spirit to be poured upon all flesh – Joel 2:28-29, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all

flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the five women whom God has allowed me to know and to love. First is my Mother Sabina Mwitanti, without whom I would not be here. Her presence in my life preceded my awareness of self and she guided my first steps as a child. As I have grown older, she inspires me with quiet influence through her life of deep faith in God. Next is my wife Kerris who came into my life as a young adult and has watched me grow into the leader that I now am. Hers is a never-ending presence in my life, providing counsel and encouragement in matters big and small. Last and by no means least, are my daughters Vickie, Heather, and Ashley. Their gifts and talents coupled with a deep faith in God justify my work in this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not be possible without the facilitation of Drew University as an institution. But an institution is made up of individuals and I would like to especially acknowledge Dr. Meredith Hoxie Schol whose role as the Director of the Doctor of Ministry program makes things happen. I equally acknowledge Dr. Terry Todd our professor for his deep knowledge and articulation of Public Theology and the patience with which he handled every student. Supporting Dr. Todd in leading us were Dr. Jacqui Lewis and Mr. John Janka. Their generosity in sharing their leadership experience provided the window into what our learning continues to produce as we put it into practice. Learning would have been boring and dry without my cohort. I have grown to love them as my academic siblings and hope to continue to be shaped by them as we put into practice what we have learned. Thank you, Arturo Lewis, Audette Fulson, Brian Moll, Carol Cissel, Jenn Stiles Williams, Lydia Munoz, Mandy Todd, Ronald Sullivan, Ryan Smith, Scott Foster, Scott Kershner, Teaira Parker, Todd Leach, Travis Boyd, and William Waller. I would remiss if I did not acknowledge my interviewees for their openness and sincerity in answering my questions, some of which required personal illustration.

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## **Introduction**

This project was inspired by two factors. The first is that until I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry in Public Theology program, I had a limited scope of my influence on people as a pastor. This was due to my ecclesiology and practical theology background. The former has to do with the study of the nature and structure of the church and the latter has to do with how to be the pastor in an organized local congregation. These were among the required courses in my seminary training, and I did well in both. Unfortunately, they confined my understanding of the pastorate to the local church and the universal Church. Missing was how to engage the public both as a pastor and a Christian. I am not suggesting that nothing to do with how to engage the public was taught. Evangelism was all about winning masses for Christ and that is public. However, I did not prepare for how to be of influence on the public without the ultimate need for counting the number of hands raised to receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Public Theology is more about positive presence before anything else.

The second and most important factor came from watching my Mother's spiritual gifts and leadership being constrained by her gender. How can someone so competent be limited to leading only women? To be sure, everyone thinks his or her parent is the best at what they do. But my Mother's leadership skills together with her understanding of the general matters of faith, are ones that I have weighed against my own and find them to be remarkable. This, notwithstanding the seven years of my undergraduate and graduate theological training, many years of pastoral and ecclesiastical leadership and my soon to be obtained doctorate. I have enjoyed a wide range of opportunities because I am a man while my Mother has enjoyed less

only because she is a woman. My Mother's voice needs to be fully heard as urged by Hazel Ayanga, "There are women in Africa whose voices are still whispers, whose experiences are regarded as non-issues and who still wallow in abject poverty. Despite great gains in some of our communities, the girl child remains an endangered species."<sup>1</sup> This project has opened up avenues of conversation which are leading to women like my Mother being allowed to integrate into the full leadership of the church and apply their gifts to the maximum.

One would, however, expect that gender inequality is the thing of the past and that the talents of women are globally embraced on their merit, until the United States elects a woman as Vice President. The entire world reacted when the then United States presidential candidate Joseph R. Biden announced his pick of Kamala D. Harris as his presidential elections running mate, essentially setting her up as second in command and "a heartbeat" away from becoming president as some idiomatically put it. While curiosity and reaction are expected whenever political candidates emerge, the choice of a woman, especially one of color evoked a much more pronounced reaction. To be sure, this was not the first time a woman was running for one of the highest positions in government. Other countries have already had women heads of state. But this was the United States. For some, it was about time a woman was meritoriously recognized for the position, gender aside. For others, a position of such status was deemed to be ill suited for a woman. For yet others, a woman of color in no way qualifies to lead the United States as Vice President at best and President at worst. As expected, it did not take long before derogatory comments started coming.

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<sup>1</sup> Hazel Ayanga, "Voice of the voiceless: The legacy of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians". *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 37(2), 1-6. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ve.v37i2.1580>

Leading the platoon of Harris' insulters were some Southern Baptist pastors. These are radical right-wing conservatives. Their derogatory comments were of "biblical proportion" as put by Yonat Shimron and Emily Miller in their co-authored article of January 29, 2021 for the *Religious News Service*. In it they reacted to the comments made by Tom Buck, pastor of First Baptist Church of Lindale, Texas who equated Harris to the notorious Jezebel Queen of the Bible. The fact that "Jezebel" is a derogatory term is not just for Bible scholars to know. It is as common as *Kumbaya* and *Amazing Grace*. Pastor Buck was therefore intentional when he applied it to Harris. He publicly expressed his insults in his January 22, 2021, 8:33 A.M. tweet saying, "I can't imagine any truly God-fearing Israelite who would've wanted their daughters to view Jezebel as an inspirational role model because she was a woman in power." We can conclude without ambiguity that Buck's concerns are not spiritual or even moral, but sexist and racist. While it is probable that Buck's view of Harris is driven by his party affiliation, it is more likely that Harris' gender invites the ire.

Buck was not the only pastor who felt it necessary to disparage Harris using biblical nomenclature. Unwilling to be outshined in his negative use of scripture to berate a woman, Steve Swofford, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rockwall, Texas, also used the same term as Buck. In his sermon of January 21, 2021, Swofford, who is reportedly a member of the executive committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, took a swipe at President Biden, and used the occasion to apply the label of Jezebel on Harris. Reporting on this story in *The Baptist News*, Mark Wingfield quotes Swofford as saying, "What if something happens to him [Biden] and

Jezebel has to take over? Jezebel Harris isn't that her name?"<sup>2</sup> Swofford knows Harris' first name but chose Jezebel to highlight her gender negatively and disparagingly.

What makes both Buck and Swofford's comments relevant to this project is the authority with which they make them and the ability of their followers to interpret them as God-sanctioned. This is the challenge we have to deal with later in the project. In the meantime, I have set the basis for my project on my Mother's gifts for full church leadership<sup>3</sup> and the denomination which limits that for now. This should explain why me, a Lutheran Pastor, is advocating for change in the Baptist Church of Zambia. My Mother belongs to the Baptist Church and her gifts are stifled by the Baptist Church. This concern also applies to churches in other African countries, and their role in gender inequality.

I have also shared some personal perspectives as they apply to this project. My wife and me are parents of four children: a son and three daughters. Our son was born first and one of our friends congratulated us for what he said was a great start to parenting in the Zambian culture. When my wife asked him why he considered the birth of a son to be 'great,' he said, with a wink, that in our culture, having a son is a must, whereas a daughter is welcome. Hidden in this thinly veiled joke was the lamentable belief that males are superior to women — a notion that promotes unjust ways in which women are esteemed less than men when it comes to responsibilities and social status. This distinction starts early. It does not take long for a male toddler to realize that he is not only different from a female because of gender, but also in the way he is handled. I remember my Father telling me about how he would playfully throw me in the air and waiting

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Wingfield, "A second SBC pastor in Texas called Vice President Kamala Harris 'Jezebel'." *Baptist News Global*, January 29, 2021. <https://baptistnews.com/article/a-second-sbc-pastor-in-texas-called-vice-president-kamala-harris-jezebel/#.YOhVlxD3afA>.

<sup>3</sup> By full church leadership I mean not just leading women but leading the church including being able to preach and teach both men and women.

until very close to the ground before he would quickly scoop me. My sister who is two years older than me was handled differently. She would be held gently by the hand and the roughest thing she ever did was run after an object. The fact that I survived being tossed in the air made me feel different from her not just because I was male and she was female, but that I was stronger than she was. This difference instilled in me a sense of superiority over my sister. I should be quick to say that I have the utmost respect for her and no longer feel that way. The belief that boys and men are superior to women was reinforced and internalized by what I saw at Church when I became old enough to attend Sunday School. All the Sunday School teachers were men, notwithstanding the fact that the church had more women in membership.

Women and girls' subservient status was everywhere when I was growing up. This was highlighted in my Mother's family. My Mother was born as one of fourteen children comprising of ten girls and four boys. Of the fourteen, only the last born (a woman) finished high school and went on to college. My Grandfather was of the traditional view of the women's role in marriage as one of having children and running the house, something that does not require expensive education. The only reason my aunt was able to go to college was because she had moved in with my parents and they had supported her through school without the consent and knowledge of my Grandfather. He only realized that his youngest daughter had been to school when she surprised him and my Grandmother with goods which she had purchased with her first salary. As it turns out, education ended up being the liberating force for my aunt as she was able to provide for herself for most of her life. Meanwhile, Grandpa's worldview deprived my Mother of the ability to read. Eventually that would change after my Mother married my Father and they had become Christians. Her new faith created an insatiable appetite for more Christian knowledge but that required her being able to read. Yes, Bible studies were offered in the Church that she

and my Dad had joined, but she could not wait a week before the next session. She had to study the Bible in between. Providentially for her and Dad, a reading class was introduced, and Mom was the first to sign up. Not long after that, she was able to hold the open Bible in her hand, not simply because one had to own a Bible as a sign of a good Christian, but this time she could actually read it. She admits that she never would have learned how to read otherwise.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

There are key terms that I have used in this project whose meaning needs to be understood before I reference them. These terms can mean different things to different people depending on their theological, sociological, and ecclesiastical background. I would like to give them meaning that is relevant to this project.

### **Public Theology**

Public theology is a fairly recent Christian discipline whose aim and goal is to take the Church from under the steeple and put it onto the highways and byways of everyday human living. It engages the public, not purely for the sake of immediate spiritual dividends, rather to understand the need for the common good and ways of arriving at the solution to those needs. Adding the public to theology puts the goodness of God who is the *theos* in theology, at the intersection of humankind. Public Theology strips its adherents of the temptation to use God as a cajole to drive people into heaven. Instead, it compels its adherents to let God be good not to a select few but all of humankind made in his image. It harnesses goodness from every source and applies it to every need.

### **The Church**

The Christian Church is at the center of this project. When talking about the Church, I mean it in three senses: 1. Etymological, 2. Ecclesiastical and 3. Denominational. There are moments when I talk about the church simply as the house of God or the gathering of the people of God. That is its etymological rendering. Other times I talk about the Church as living beings who are the called out. This is the ecclesiastical rendering drawn from the Greek “ek” (out) and

“lessia” (called) – literally meaning the people who are called out. This is the distinction between the secular and sacred. The secular meaning society in general and the sacred meaning the Church in particular. A denomination is a collection of local congregations whose membership is likeminded in doctrine and practice and may share regional or national leadership. For example, the Southern Baptist of the United States is a denomination whose membership might consist of [First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Emmanuel Baptist Church of Lorton], etc.

Understanding what Church means is especially important for my African audience (particularly Zambian) for whom the term Church is supposed to be straight forward since they are born into it, live through it, and are buried by it. They assume that it means the same for everyone. Moreover, understanding Church also helps us realize how often people who subscribe to it fail to live by its dictates, including treating women as second-class citizens compared to men.

### **Gender Inequality**

In this project, the term gender inequality is a fraternal twin of the word Church. In the setting where this project is focused, they go hand in hand. Where you find the Church, you find subservient women. For this project, I have restricted myself to the binary application of gender as represented by the male and female anatomy. We are talking about the male gender as boys and men and the female gender as girls and women. Inequality simply means that the two genders are viewed and treated not as equals but as one being superior to the other. In this case, the superior gender is male (man) while the subservient gender is female (woman). We need to stick with gender inequality and avoid being distracted by the argument for gender distinction.



My problem is not whether men and women are different. That is too plain and obvious. My concern is whether men and women are equal and in what ways.

### **Biblical**

The term biblical in this project refers to that which is presented as having its roots in the Bible. For example, some argue that keeping women subservient to men has its origins in the Bible and is therefore biblical. Understanding this helps us avoid succumbing to someone's simplistic argument for something as coming from the Bible, hence we must take it or live it. The classic example for this is the expression, "The Bible says it, I believe it, and that settles it!" My duty is to push for more clarification on what it means that something is biblical. I am pushing for cultural and chronological distinctions.

### **Bible**

In this project, the Bible is the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian scriptures. These are the sacred writings which some believe to be inspired by God and therefore without error, while others believe them to be written by men on behalf of God and can therefore be questioned. It is not my intention to dispute one against the other. My intention in this project is to argue for the interpretation and application of the Bible in ways that acknowledge that it was written in different cultures, some of which were oppressive to women but were not intended to be normative. The interpretation and application that I have in mind is the one that embraces moments that clearly recognize all people as equal creatures made in the

image of God. Understanding the Bible from this point of view aids in the effort to contextualize the role of women in the Church and society.

## **Gifts**

The term “gifts” applies to talents, abilities, and skills. Whenever you see any of these words used, take them as synonyms or representations of the word gifts. I deliberately used gifts because those who use their talents, abilities, or skills, do so with the recognition that it is God who gave them everything they possess, and He did so for the purpose of us serving one another and for His (God’s) glory. If God is therefore the source of everything we have, why should we limit the use of the same sources just because they are possessed by a woman? Laura Copeland makes an important point on the understanding the use of the gifts of women for the benefit of the Church. She says, “To encourage more women to lead (whether in the hospitality ministry, the women’s ministry, or the pastoral ministry), we must learn to look first at the gifts, talents, and experiences that they bring to the table.”<sup>4</sup>

## **Theology**

In this project, the term theology is used to aid my understanding of how God fits into the belief systems of Africans both religious and cultural. If we talk about the theology of gender, we must be willing to come to terms with how God really feels about gender, not what we think his

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<sup>4</sup> Laura Copeland, "Encourage More Women to Lead." *Christianity Today*, June 30, 2016. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women-leaders/2016/june/encourage-more-women-to-lead.html>.

position on gender is. We must reckon with the fact that the God who made man as male and female gave them gifts to use for His glory. Therefore, how men treat women must fit into our theology.

### **Conservative**

At the heart of inequality between men and women in the Church is the term conservative. For this project, the term conservative refers to those who hold to the teachings of Scripture as absolute when it comes to the role of women. The conservatives might acknowledge that the Bible was written in the cultures different from our own but are unwilling to contextualize the teachings for our time. Understanding how conservatism shapes how women are treated helps us in my engagement of those in position of responsibility when it comes to advocating for the full integration of women in the leadership of the Church.

### **Liberal/Progressive**

The liberal and progressives are those who embrace the teachings of the Bible and the Church through the lens of the grace of God as exemplified in the teachings and actions of Jesus. They believe in the God who loves all and is no respecter of gender when it comes to who He calls and for what purpose.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE CHURCH'S POSITION ON WOMEN AND THE BIBLE

The cause for women's equality as part of the mission of the Church in Africa has not received adequate attention. This is partly due to the original position of the Church in matters pertaining to women and their role in the Church and society, both in the West as well as non-western cultures. It was not long ago that the Church in the United States, including progressive denominations like the Episcopal and Evangelical Lutheran Churches, allowed only men on its clergy and missionary rosters. But change is happening. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, for example, celebrated in 2018 the 50th anniversary of the ordination of its first woman pastor. Today, the ELCA boasts of twenty women bishops out of sixty-five. Of the twenty women, one leads the denomination as Presiding Bishop. In spite of this paradigm shift however, the Church in some places that used to be the mission field overseas, has maintained its original position on the role and status of women in the Church and to a lesser extent, society. There, change is happening at a much slower pace, except for the African Methodist Church where according to S.E.H. Blair, the church is now with its second generation of women presiding elders.<sup>5</sup> For example, the Church I grew up in in Zambia does not allow women to preach, teach or lead Bible studies when men are present. This position did not only suit the missionaries when they first arrived in Africa with the original biblical traditions on women, it

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<sup>5</sup> Sandra E H Blair, "The Second Generation of Female Presiding Elders in the African Methodist Episcopal Church." *The A.M.E. Church Review* (2010), 126.

also found footing in the local culture and traditions. As an African male who subscribed to the position on women as being subservient to men, at least during the earlier years of my pastoral work in Zambia, I am ashamed to read Oduyoye's indictment that, "The male Christian interpreters of the Bible and African culture have collaborated to create or perpetuate cultural practices that dehumanize women in all African societies."<sup>6</sup> They (and myself) were trained by missionaries in such biblical interpretation. Although I cannot state for sure that the missionaries who taught me would have supported dehumanization of women, since some of my classmates in Bible School were women, I can say that many came from the theological background which embraces exclusive male leadership in the Church, hence included in the charge that Oduyoye levels, although the word dehumanization seems a bit hyperbolic.

### **The Bible as An Excuse**

The Christian Bible is the best-selling book of all times. It has survived burning and banning over millennia. It is accredited to the turning around of people who once faced life's gravest challenges. It has taught how to love with action and how to give unconditionally. But the Bible has also been used for nefarious ends. Moreover, the Bible has been the strongest argument in support of men only leadership in the Church. It is used to promote a patriarchal system of leadership especially in the Church in Africa. Putting this point in stark terms in his writing on *The Church and Gender Equality in Africa*, Casimir states, "In African societies, the traditional gender

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<sup>6</sup> Pui-Ian Kwok, "Mercy Amba Oduyoye and African Women's Theology." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* (2004), 20.

roles are usually maintained by a system of patriarchy which sees men as pre-eminent human beings and women as secondary whose roles are meant to complement those of men.”<sup>7</sup>

The first copy of the Bible I ever owned was a tiny Gideon’s New Testament. I was in grade school at the time, and it had been announced for months that a Gideon’s representative would bring a Bible for every single student. When the day came, every student, including the tardy, made sure they were in attendance. The Principal cancelled classes and ordered every activity to be centered on Bible distribution. When the turn for my class came, we filed outside and lined up on the assembly grounds. We were ordered to space out by arm’s length, but that arrangement proved impossible as students pushed forward, concerned that the Bibles might run out in spite of earlier assurances to the contrary. The best part to all of this was being able to write one’s name on the inside cover which commemorated ownership of the most treasured literature in the country. Every shirt pocket on the uniform contained a glowing brand-new New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs. Such is the place of the Bible in most sub-Saharan Africa and there are implications for better or worse. I address the latter first.

The reverence with which the Bible is handled (and it should be) makes it a perfect tool for the advancement of an agenda. In Africa especially, not many would dare argue against a Bible teacher, especially one who quotes scriptures verbatim. If the Bible is believed to say a man is superior to a woman, a good listener takes that by faith and avoids asking any questions even if they might be helpful in establishing the cultural context in which something was written.

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<sup>7</sup> Ani Casimir, Matthew C. Chukwuelobe, Collins Ugwu. "The Church and Gender Equality in Africa." *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4, no. (2014), 166-173. [https://www.scirp.org/pdf/ojpp\\_2014052214162233.pdf](https://www.scirp.org/pdf/ojpp_2014052214162233.pdf).

Fundiswa Kobo understands this better than anyone, “The construct of patriarchy has been sustained by Christian rationalizations. This is indeed not new in the South African context, if we look at how the ideology of apartheid was derived from the Bible... the domination and subjugation of the indigenous peoples, the suppression of their religions and their cultures, were legitimated and sanctioned by Biblical injunctions.”<sup>8</sup>

I was recently recording our family history as recounted by my Mother. I did the same before my Father passed away and one of the things I made sure I included in the accounting was my parents’ participation in the development of the national Baptist church in the 59 years of Mom’s membership. She recounted a time when she and other key leaders of the women’s groups in local congregations decided to organize on the national level and form the Women’s League of the Baptist Union of Zambia. The men had formed theirs many years prior. But when the intentions of the women reached the national executive committee which comprised only men, they (the men) told the women that the leadership and organizational needs of the whole church were in the capable hands of the men’s executive committee. The plan to form the Women’s League was insubordination and a shot at equality, something that was considered to be unbiblical. Men were called to oversight and not women. Thankfully, my Mother and her colleagues insisted and after five years of negotiations, the Women’s League was formed, but not without the clause that allowed the Co-option of the chairman of the men’s league into its executive. This, they said, was to maintain Church order. But that is selective because the same Paul who talked about the issue of women being silent also addressed the dress code.

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<sup>8</sup> F.A. Kobo, “A womanist exposition of pseudo- spirituality and the cry of an oppressed African woman”, HTS Theologiese Studies/ Theological Studies 4896. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v74i1.4896> (2018), 74.

Unfortunately, only silence is enforced because it guarantees that men will not be challenged for leadership.

I have used this argument of selective cultural elements of the early church to challenge those who insist on the subservient role of women in the Church. Their non-convincing exegetical response suggests to me that their position on women and their role in the Church is not about faithfulness to Scripture but maintaining the levers of power and authority. The quest for and maintainable of power, whether in the Church or the secular world is hard to resist. It is especially easy to maintain if one is backed by the Bible.

### **Speaking of the Bible**

The Bible forms the basis upon which decisions are made in my Mother's church. I support the role of the Bible in the governance and function of the Church. But I do so realizing that it contains stories which directly or indirectly lend credence to the superiority of men in the Church. One such story involves King David as found in I Kings 1.

“King David was old and advanced in years; and although they covered him with clothes, he could not get warm. So his servants said to him, “Let a young virgin be sought for my lord the king, and let her wait on the king, and be his attendant; let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm.” So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful. She became the king's attendant and served him, but the king did not know her sexually.” 1 Kings 1:1-4 NRSV

### **David and Abishag**

This is a story that covers King David who is described as a man after God's heart.<sup>9</sup> And yet his physical needs are placed above the needs of an innocent young girl with no say in the matter. One would argue that this was culturally acceptable, and the text is clear about there being no sex involved. But we should not forget the fact that David had failed to curb his sexual

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<sup>9</sup> I Samuel 13:14



appetites earlier in his life. The story of his adultery with Bathsheba a woman was married to one of the troops under David's command is well articulated. So how can we be sure that there was absolutely no sex involved? Even if there was no sex, the freedom of the young woman to live her life as she pleased was taken away from her. Several things are problematic about the way Abishag was handled.

### **She was brought against her will.**

*“So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.”*

In many instances like this, theologians defer to the culture of the time as the reason why things like this happened. While that is true and should be borne in mind when reading a story like this, it has the potential to subconsciously elevate a man and give him the sense of power over a woman. It does not matter that Abishag did not have a gun pointed to her head. She would have been too young to consent which means that her Father or guardians agreed with King David's aides.

### **She was sexually violated.**

*“Let her lie in your bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm.”*

I find it telling that the writer made sure to point out that the King did not know her sexually. A few years ago, I did some study on this story and discovered that the practice of a young virgin keeping the aged man warm involved the removal of the clothes of both participants and sleeping in a direct and intimate contact. As is often the case, biblical stories can have suggestive influence on some and it is not surprising that the term Shunamitism was coined as a derivative of this story. A definition soon followed: Shunamitism "is the practice of an old

man sleeping with, but not necessarily having sex with, a young virgin to preserve his youth.”<sup>10</sup>

There is no record that says other things that are just as sexually violating as intercourse occurred. We know that a woman can be sexually violated without there ever being direct intercourse. Looking at her lustfully is an example Jesus raises in support of this point, “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”<sup>11</sup>

### **She was objectified.**

*The girl was very beautiful.*

It is obvious that the virgin was picked for her physical appearance, something befitting a king. Her feelings and considerations in this matter were immaterial. It mattered only that the king should be satisfied, and his life be prolonged even if that meant the life of the virgin being compromised. There are other reasons suggested for the presence of Abishag in David’s bed. None of them supports the need to preserve her innocence and dignity.

### **She was exposed to future abuse.**

*“He said, “Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.”*

By coming into the palace, Abishag became exposed to Adonijah who sought to marry her as part of his plot to usurp the kingship. It is obvious that he was physically attracted to her and wanted to marry her as a trophy but using her to facilitate ascendancy to the throne by marrying one of David’s concubine was a more nefarious reason.

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<sup>10</sup> Native English Web Dictionary, <https://eng.ichacha.net/zaoju/shunamitism.html>

<sup>11</sup> [www.bible.com/2016/mat.5.28.nrsv](http://www.bible.com/2016/mat.5.28.nrsv)

Just as it took the support of missionaries from the western churches to establish churches in the original African traditions and theologies as observed above, it is taking the original mission bases (sending churches) to support the work of natives as they seek to find ways that allow women to have full expression and application of their gifts. But how does one go about undoing what has come to be regarded as the very foundation of the Church in which men lead and women follow? How do western churches support those in non-western traditions in changing what culture and faith have jointly inculcated into their mindsets? Here is something to consider as presented by Audi Vahakangas, “The most interesting feminist contribution to missiological anthropology is the search for a new cultural identity by modern African Christians. This search for identity includes a critical and positive view of African traditional practices.”<sup>12</sup> This is one explanation for why the African Independent Churches (AIC) can be of value to the success of this project.

I have urged both my American congregation whose leadership comprises men and women as well as my denomination whose presiding bishop is a woman, to promote a paradigm shift in global missions with the goal to promote and exemplify the benefits of allowing women to function in roles that were traditionally considered to be exclusively men’s. One would say that that is already happening in some more open denominations in Africa. Peggy Hiscock who is a woman missionary sent by the Methodist Church in Britain to serve in the United Church of Zambia is a model for how missionaries can play a part in amplifying equality. Jonathan Kangwa has written on Hiscock’s work and sums up her missionary contributions to the cause for women’s role in the Church. He argues that “Although the nineteenth- and twentieth-century

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<sup>12</sup> Audi Vähäkangas, “African Feminist Contributions to Missiological Anthropology.” *Mission Studies*. 10.1163/157338311X605665. (2011), 170-185.

missionary movement in Africa is associated with patriarchy and European imperialism, there were European women missionaries who resisted imperialism and patriarchy both in the Church and society.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Resources**

The effort to include women in the full life of the church requires wisdom and scholarship. Thankfully, a few authors have put their thoughts on paper. Elias K. Bongba in his writing on *The Dialectics of Transformation in Africa*, edited by Suzanne Mueller, discusses power and acknowledges its ultimate source as God. As such, we should see no reason why power should be exclusively reserved for a select few who happen to be men. I should admit that Bongba is addressing political power, however, the principal applies to church power and its treatment of women. This is what he says, “God, who is the source of power, does not favor some people because they have the privilege of ruling. Instead, God, as Karl Barth has argued, has always acted on behalf of the lowly and those who have been denied privilege here on Earth.”<sup>14</sup> Because God is the source of power and shows no partiality, women who are qualified should be allowed to hold positions of leadership without reservation. Their presence in the Church and society is owed to God and not man.

As I continued to read more about the need for women to be recognized in their fullness by the Church in Africa, I realized the need to have a good grasp of the theology of women both

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Kangwa, “The Legacy of Peggy Hiscock: European Women’s Contribution to the Growth of Christianity in Zambia.” *Feminist Theology* 28, no. 3 (May 2020), 316–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0966735020906940>.

<sup>14</sup> Susanne D. Mueller, *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006), 553-555. Accessed July 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40034859>.

in the general context as well as in the African context. Doing so would create the atmosphere in which what I offer to the leaders of my original church in Zambia was given consideration and could be part of the basis for collaboration. To prepare for this, I engaged the writing of those who have already been grappling with this age-old challenge of women roles in society and have eloquently shared their conclusions.

As I pondered the daunting task I was creating for myself through this project as an African male who happens to have neutralized his gender distinctions because I migrated to the West and might therefore be dismissed (at least my efforts), I could not help but find refuge in Deborah F. Sawyer and her article *The Case of Abraham's Masculinity*. Discussing the offshoot of Elizabeth Stanton's Women's Bible, Sawyer wondered, "Whether one could be both a feminist and a practitioner of a biblically based tradition."<sup>15</sup> I shared in this wonder because feminism by its definition and its aspirations had to be an essential component to the efforts of recognizing women and embracing their full participation in the Church in Zambia. The challenge, however, has always been that a typical Zambian woman who was raised in the traditional evangelical Church would ask herself if it were possible to both push for gender equality and be true to the Bible. The solution to this dilemma has been (in part) faithful and courageous hermeneutics that demonstrates the position of Jesus on women as demonstrated in his engagement and acceptance of the woman of Samaria at the well (John 4) and her subsequent mass evangelism, the pre-eminence of women in the story of Easter, Jesus' attention to and affection for Mary His Mother, and the role of Lydia in the early Church among other examples.

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<sup>15</sup> Ursula King, and Tina Beattie. "Gender, Religion and Diversity : Cross-Cultural Perspectives." London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2005. Accessed July 10, 2021. ProQuest Ebook Central.

Looking at the above stated examples of Jesus and his acceptance of women, we can conclude that identifying the great ways in which the women of the Bible used their gifts would be a compelling reason to consider when looking at the possibility of women serving in what has been the exclusive positions of men in the Church. This notion finds support in Mary Daly's description of the impact women have in society as recorded in *Gender Genre and Religion*. Her observation which is graphic and is worth keeping in mind when dealing with matters of the role of women in the Church in Zambia and beyond, "Envisages an innate energy particular to women that she calls "pure lust."<sup>16</sup>

Any person with a Mother, sister, aunt or Grandmother or other women present in his or her life can appreciate Daly's description and agree that the Church is ill served when women are relegated to lesser roles than men. My own Mother Sabina Mwitanti has served God faithfully since 1961 when shortly after marrying my late Father, they were introduced to the Christian faith and became active members of the Baptist Church in Zambia. Her acquired knowledge of the Bible and ecclesiology in the fifty-nine years that she has been a believer, far surpass my own. This notwithstanding the fact that her formal education ended in third grade due to my Grandfather's (her Father) policy against education for his daughters as they would only be useful as wives. This point is expanded elsewhere in the paper. Despite this, my Mother understanding of the Bible does not allow my graduate studies in divinity to offer me an edge over her spiritual gifts. The change in the way women are viewed by the Church in Zambia would unleash the bottled knowledge and wisdom that wells up in women like my Mother.

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<sup>16</sup> Joy Morny, and Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay, "Gender, Genre and Religion: Feminist Reflections." Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006. [muse.jhu.edu/book/40313](http://muse.jhu.edu/book/40313).

One other place where I turned to support my cause was the women of the Masai tribe in Kenya who fit Daly's graphic description. My Mother and her gifts find full expression and application in this culture because the women of the Masai are the exclusive guardian of the religion of their tribe. They are believed to have better communication with their god Engai than men. Their devotion to Engai is driven by their concern and care for their families and livestock which they seek to safeguard with Engai's help. They believe that men lack this level of dedication. To investigate further the role of Masai women in religion to see if their claims, are true, I turned to Dorothy Hodgson's *Church of Women: Gendered Encounters between Maasai and Missionaries*. What I discovered was that in the Masai tribe, and the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa for that matter, spiritual life tends to have the predominance of women than men. Moreover, these women are not there just because they are bored at home. To the contrary, they are at Church or spiritual event with intentions and commitment. Hodgson concurs when she writes, "A significant paradox of the missionary endeavor in many parts of Africa, as elsewhere, is the preponderance of female adherents to Christianity, despite concerted efforts by most mainstream missionary groups to convert men."<sup>17</sup>

Arguing for women's participation in the Church simply because of the women's passion as described by Daly can only take us so far. I need to wrap some theological meat to the bones of passion. Thankfully a more direct theological argument as shaped by Shannon Smythe in her book *Women in Ministry* comes to my aid. She writes, "The dramatic beginning of the Church, in the event of Pentecost and fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:1-36), demonstrates clearly that the gifting of the Spirit has pushed out beyond all former barriers of race, gender, economic and

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<sup>17</sup> D.L. Hodgson, "The church of women: Gendered encounters between maasai and missionaries. The Church of Women: Gendered Encounters between Maasai and Missionaries." (2005), 1-307.

social status. There simply are no longer any standard divisions among people when it comes to the Spirit's outpouring" (Smythe, 2015). This passage is one of the most direct statements from God himself concerning the gender-blind appropriation of spirit gifts. The fact that men in some of the Zambian churches still deny women the opportunity to fully participate in the life of the Church proves their willful dismissal of clear scriptures and are therefore responsible for the discrimination created by their actions. Smythe's careful examination of this well-known event of Pentecost is that it speaks for itself and its meaning and application transcends generations. It is as true today as it was in the early church. It should be obvious that if God wanted only men to preach, he would have specified it by limiting the filling of the Holy Spirit only to men. As I argued earlier, my Mother's knowledge of the Bible and her ability to teach it is far greater than many men that I know. It was her teaching of the Bible during the Good News Club, held in our backyard as an after-school church program, that introduced me to the Christian faith. Many of what she taught me, and other kids would later form the backdrop to my initial theological training. It is beyond dispute that she is fully filled with the Holy Spirit and can stand in front of men and women and faithfully proclaim the teachings of scriptures.

But as is often the case where injustice and discrimination occur, those who are dealt unjustly bear the burden of proving themselves right or deserving. In this case, the women are having to prove themselves before they can be recognized and allowed equal function in society and in the church. This is the same as a person of color being reminded that he needs to work twice as hard for the same benefits as a person of privilege. It is my hope that the work I have begun on behalf of the women of Zambia finds support from areas in Africa that have women whose continued education beyond that of my Mother has liberated them from the clutches of patriarchy and put them on the platform.



If all this project does is fight for gender equality in the functions of the Church, it has failed the larger cause. Only when equality in the Church transforms both the family and society has it accomplished its ultimate objective. One way in which women's rights to full participation in the church can have influence in the family is when the husband begins to recognize the importance of his wife in the presence of their children and base his actions on his faith. It takes courage and conviction for any African male who was raised to meet both societal and ecclesiastical expectations of a man to somehow drop those and adopt a more progressive view of his wife and her skills. The church's embrace of equality and full participation of women in the church is the necessary impetus for this change.

My initial aim in this effort was to facilitate a mutual relationship between Zambian women and our church here in the United States whose goal is to support their efforts of full participation in their Church. I am excited to say that is underway. However, I am not naïve to the challenges that my final project has had to face as I continue to confront the deep seated cultural and theological norms of Zambia. But Public Theology by nature compels me to engage in difficult tasks whose final benefits might come long after I am gone. As defined in the terms and definitions, Public Theology stretches the church in new and unconventional ways. The conservatives who are also defined under terms and definitions would consider Public Theology to be a threat to orthodoxy. Jesus in his attitude and conduct was a public theologian whose preference for the poor put him at loggerheads with religious authorities. Moreover, this project is pushing for a paradigm shift in missions with women taking and maintaining significant leadership positions as an example to the Church whose traditions and beliefs concerning women are under threat.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IT STARTS WITH NAMING

Some scholars have argued that names do not have meaning, instead, they only serve the purpose of referencing. I disagree! Names, especially last names, have significance which transcends reference. In most cases, they embody a relationship. For example, Johnson was the name given to the son of John. Other times, names signified someone's career, for example, Coppersmith. In the days of slavery, names denoted ownership. This is how black people ended up with European last names. In some tribes of Zambia, last names are classified by gender. If we take the Mambwe and Namwanga tribes in Zambia as an example, we find that the sister's last name is different from the brother even though they share both parents. The purpose for this difference is to underscore the gender of the woman. It is not that her brother's name is masculinized, it is rather her name which is feminized. His prefix is "si" and hers is "na". Where his last name is *Sinyangwe*, hers will be *Nanyangwe*. This way, there is no mistake in hers or anyone's mind that she is a woman.

While the prefixes might serve the purpose of gender distinction, they also remind us as to who belongs where. For example, as a woman, Monica Nanyangwe belongs in the kitchen and one of her roles in the family is to make sure she cooks on time so that her brother Eric Sinyangwe can sit back, relax, and eat. Sinyangwe might even chastise Nanyangwe if she delays preparing the meal. Moreover, Michael Simbeye has a better chance of serving in church

leadership than his sister Alice Nambeye. At the end of the day, these graphs are not just symbols of gender distinction, but reminders of gender inequality.<sup>18</sup>

One of the worries African parents (especially fathers) have when they have a daughter is that the loss of their last name. Changing the last name upon marriage is a double edged sword. On the one hand, it serves the purpose to amplify the new status of a married woman. So treasured is marriage that anything that highlights it is embraced even if it is the loss of a name by which a woman has been known all her life. Nothing lets her friends of the woman know of this change in status better than to be called by the last name of her husband. On the other hand, a woman getting married guarantees the end of the last name. Sometimes women have attempted to keep their last only to suffer some consequences for it. Valerie Tarico writing for *The Establishment* puts highlights this point when she talks about Hillary Clinton's experience when Bill first ran for governor of Arkansas. Says, "Hillary Rodham kept her name when she and Bill got married in 1975. But this became an issue during her husband's gubernatorial campaigns in Arkansas. The Republican who defeated Bill in 1980 made a point of telling voters that *his* wife was Mrs. Frank White. Hillary conceded, and when Bill ran again in 1982, she accompanied him on the campaign trail as Mrs. Bill Clinton."<sup>19</sup>

In Bible times, women were tantamount to the property of their parents, particularly fathers. As such, they had little to no say when it came to marriage. The story of Jacob and his marriage to sisters Leah and Rachel covered elsewhere in the paper is a clear example. In it, Laban the Father of the sisters decided who got married first. It was not Jacob's intention to

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<sup>18</sup> The names here are fictitious.

<sup>19</sup> Valerie Tarico, "Women Taking Their Husbands' Last Names Is Biblical Misogyny." *The Establishment*, October 15, 2016. <https://theestablishment.co/women-taking-their-husbands-last-names-is-biblical-misogyny-311414df7d97/index.html>.

marry both sisters as his eyes had been cast steadily on Rachel. But it was up to neither him nor Rachel but Laban. This explains why men's names become the identity of their wives.

When we have a woman in the Church going by her married name, we subconsciously view her in light of the husband whose name she bears. This is true whether or not he is an active member of the Church. His presence and status lurks around her identity, a dynamic that is given weight by her carrying of his name. One of the points I made while engaging men and women on this matter is the inherent identity of a woman as a human being first, a woman next, and a wife if she was married. By considering her in this way, her gifts and abilities are tied to her being and not her relationships. Rather than focusing on Mrs Such presiding over the study, I have challenged them to focus on the gifts of the leader instead.

## CHAPTER THREE

## WOMEN — POSSESSIONS NOT PARTNERS

As already observed, the promoters of gender inequality find justification in not only the cultures of biblical times, but also biblical doctrine. For example, women in biblical times were expected to leave their parents' households to join their husbands. A woman would rely on her husband for her livelihood for the rest of her life. Sarah left her family to join Abraham. Rebecca left her family to join Isaac. Rachel and Leah eventually left their Father Laban to join Jacob. The story of Naomi, Ruth and Orpah in the book of Ruth is a classic example. Their desperation following the loss of their husbands, revealed the culture in which women fully depended on men. Their only hope was Ruth's kinsman's redeemer, and he was also a man. Without him, they risked losing whatever little they had and would end up relying on leftovers from barley harvest. In her book, *Two Women in a Man's World*, Phyllis Tribble describes in a dramatic fashion the misfortune suffered by Naomi and her daughters-in-law. When her dramatized story comes to the point where Naomi's sons die, Tribble writes, "The definition of worth, by which it values the female, applies to her no more. The blessings of old age, which it gives through progeny, are there no longer. Stranger in a foreign land, this woman is a victim of death – and of life."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Phyllis Tribble, "Two Women in a Man's World": A Reading of the Book of Ruth." *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 59, no. 3 (1976), 251-79. Accessed July 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41177998>.

As was the case in biblical times, most women of Zambia together with those of other African countries exist under the headship of and reliance on at least two men. The first is the Father and the second is the husband. In biblical times, in the event that a woman's Father was deceased or unknown, an uncle or Grandfather assumed the role. Where the husband still lived under his Father's rule, the wife submitted to the authority of her husband and his Father. This made it typical for a woman to have lived under the headship of at least three men – her Father (or uncle), husband, and Father-in-law, when it was all said and done.

### **Women and Lobola (Bride Price)**

Payment of the dowry or bride price or 'Lobola' as it is commonly referred to in Africa and can be expensive in some tribes, enhances the authority a man has on a woman. Some of the negative effects of Lobola are highlighted by co-authors Nogget Matope, Nyevero Maruzani, Efiritha Chauraya, and Beatrice Bondai who state, "The critics of Lobola argue that this traditional practice has been commercialized because of the dollarization of the economy and has since lost its real value and function as men use it as a tool to oppress, exploit and dominate women."<sup>21</sup> Lobola in having increased unintended consequences, including unnecessary delay in a couple getting married. However, it all boils down to a woman becoming a commodity that is paid for and therefore belonging to the payer. Yarborough hints at this in his journal article titled, *Very Long Engagements: The Persistent Authority of Bride wealth in a Post-Apartheid South African Community*, "Another set of concerns, expressed by some women, suggested that Lobola symbolically and materially disadvantages women, for example, by legitimating abuse by

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<sup>21</sup> Nugget Matope & Maruzani Nyevero & Efiritha Chauraya, & Beatrice Bondai, "Lobola and gender based violence: Perceptions of married adults in Gweru urban, Zimbabwe." (2013)

husbands who see themselves as having paid for the respect and domestic labor of their wives.”<sup>22</sup>

When I was in the sixth grade at Nkulumashiba Primary School in Luanshya, Zambia, our home room teacher took a leave of absence to attend to the issues which had arisen in his marriage. The story going around the school was that he was distraught by the repossession of his wife by her parents. Yes, she was repossessed because of his inability to make payments on Lobola or bride price. This story sounded funny at the time, but I look back with lamentation at the commodifying of women by one of my country’s tribal cultures. While Lobola has its place in our culture, it sometimes plays into the temptation for greed. My teacher’s wife was repossessed the same way a car is retrieved by the bank or a house foreclosed on when the owner fails to make payments.

When I think about the potential for my three daughters to be passed out like merchandise at the wedding and having to check the mail for monthly payments towards their Lobola, I am shaken to the core. Moreover, imagining the total control that their husbands would exert on my daughters upon completion of Lobola gives me pause. If we were still living in Zambia where the need for Lobola for my daughters would be more pressing, I would pay close attention to Kojo Oduro’s wisdom as shared in a co-authored piece on the bride price and sexual violence. They write: “Our study has illustrated the need for women to appreciate that payment of bride price does not imply that their fundamental human rights have been bought by men, but they rather become partners. This information can form part of pre-marriage counselling and human rights initiatives by the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection”(Kojo Oduro et al. 2020).

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Yarbrough, “Very Long Engagements: The Persistent Authority of Bridewealth in a Post-Apartheid South African Community. *Law & Social Inquiry*.” 43. 647-77. 10.1111/lsi.12275. (2017)

One more negative aspect of Lobola is the fact that failure to agree on the terms can sometimes have a negative effect on the courtship itself. As such, the relationship is not just between a man and woman, but a man, woman, and her relatives. I interviewed a woman who recalled the strain that negotiations for Lobola put on her relationship to her fiancé. He was of a humble and peasant background and could not envision being able to afford the bride price he was being asked to pay. The only option in his mind was to call off the relationship and look for a woman who would cost less to marry. This devastated the woman to the point of attempting suicide. The dilemma was only resolved after the Pastor from the Church reluctantly intervened.

The economics of Lobola is not just in the African culture. It can also be found in the Bible where the story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel illustrates it as found in Genesis 29. At the instigation of his Mother Rebecca, and to escape the wrath of his brother Esau whose birthright he had stolen, Jacob went to Paddan-aram where his uncle Laban lived. His Mother instructed him to marry one of his cousins once he settled. As he was arriving in Paddan-aram, he stopped at a well where a beautiful woman named Rachel who happened to be his cousin had come to water her Father's sheep. It was love at first sight and Jacob offered payment of Lobola whose value was seven years' worth of free labor in the fields of his prospective Father-in-law first. This was an easy decision to make given Jacob's deep love for Rachel and her striking beauty. At the conclusion of the seven years however, Jacob was told that Rachel could not marry him before her older sister was married. He had the option to marry Leah and walk away or work another seven years to earn the right to marry Rachel. He chose the latter and married them both at the conclusion of fourteen years of Lobola. This arrangement forced Jacob into polygamy as it had not been his intention to marry Leah in addition to Rachel. Let me be quick to point out the fact that although most people in the African culture use this and other examples in the Bible for



the justification of exorbitant Lobola, they neglect the real meaning and practice which was the expression and token of gratitude and whose value was determined by the man. It was never handled in economic ways.

Paying Lobola or bride price for one's future wife is just one of many ways in which the role and status of women in the African culture and society is defined. Other ways include the posture with which a woman presents herself to a man or men. For example, after setting the meal at the dining table, a woman is expected to fully squat and invite her husband or any man to the table. This kneeling gesture is the crescendo after a day's worth of preparing the meal which would have begun with a trip to the woods to collect firewood, a trip to the creek to collect water, a trip to the market to buy food items or ingredients, and finally, the mechanics of lighting the fire and keep it burning with a handheld fan. The role and status of a woman is also highlighted by the language used and the attitude with which she addresses a man. While the argument is that that is done as an expression of respect, it sets the tone of her position.

### **The Female Body**

Beauty is not the primary reason a traditional African woman pays attention to her body. Sexual function for the pleasure of a man is. In talking to a former female classmate about my project, she revealed to me information that was typically shared with women as they prepare for marriage. It includes sexual activities and positions of intimacy whose principal purpose is to stimulate a man and keep him in that state for the duration of intercourse. It does not matter if the activity or position disadvantages a woman. The understanding is that as the man is pleased and driven to a vigorous response, the woman benefits collaterally. Hers is a fringe benefit. It is therefore not surprising that genital mutilation is still a common practice in some parts of Africa. Its goal is to suppress a woman's sexual satisfaction while heightening man's. Florence

Muhanguzi addresses the sexual pleasure disparity between men and women in her aptly titled journal entry, “*Sex is sweet*”: *women from low- income contexts in Uganda talk about sexual desire and pleasure, Reproductive Health Matters*”. She states, “In Africa, sexuality is constructed within a dominant patriarchal context of political struggles for the creation and preservation of gender hierarchy, which defines men as active and dominant and women as passive and submissive. Such constructions marginalize female sexual aspects of pleasure and desire.”<sup>23</sup>

This kind of sexual arrangement explains in part why HIV is more prevalent in Africa than other parts of the world. Biology, anatomy, and psychology tell us that both the man and woman are supposed to be emotionally and mentally engaged for sexual intercourse to be pleasurable and safe. A disengaged woman lacks the necessary preparation for safe intercourse, making her vulnerable to catch or transmit disease.

In her paper on *Eroticism, Sensuality and “Women's secrets” Among the Baganda: A critical analysis*, Sylvia Tamale shares an interesting result from a research. She writes, “One commercial Ssenga noted that the question most frequently asked by women in her sessions is: “N'omukazi amala?” meaning, “Do you mean even a woman can orgasm?” She further revealed that she herself had never experienced an orgasm in fifteen years of marriage, during which she had five children. It was not until she had an extramarital relationship that she discovered entikko y'omukazi (a woman's peak). This was reason enough for her to kunoba, and she now has a

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<sup>23</sup> Florence Kyoheirwe Muhanguzi, “Sex is sweet”: women from low-income contexts in Uganda talk about sexual desire and pleasure, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 23:46, DOI: 10.1016/j.rhm.2015.11.012 (2015), 62-70.

relationship that is sexually fulfilling.”<sup>24</sup> That it took an extra-marital sexual relationship for a woman to experience the inherent human gift of sexual pleasure is part of what inspired me to engage in this project. A willing and cooperative husband treats his wife as equals and does everything in his power to explore her sexual delights. In so doing, he spares her from the shame of adultery and the danger of contracting a sexually transmitted disease (STD) as earlier noted.

The Church must come to terms with how it has fed into the tribal patriarchal culture which creates the environment where women are subservient to men. One of the issues I have contended with has to do with how I balance what the church considers as biblical grounds for its treatment of women and outright violation of women’s rights. At what point does the patriarchal biblical culture become the means by which the constitutional rights of women are suppressed? It is not theoretical that women, including those in the church, have constitutional rights. Writing an article *Law, Religion and Human Rights in Zambia*, Abraham Mwansa highlights the constitutional provision that safeguards against discrimination of women purely on the grounds of their gender, “Article 23 of the Zambian Constitution indirectly provides for the protection of women’s rights. The provision relates to nondiscrimination on the basis of sex.”<sup>25</sup>

Part of the reason it has taken long for women to be recognized as equal partners in the Church has been due to the lack understanding the legal ramifications of the Church’s position. I constantly remind myself of the title of this project which is to acknowledge and apply the gifts of women in the Church. Hence the legal ramifications of the way the Church treats women.

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<sup>24</sup> Sylvia Tamale, “Eroticism, Sensuality and ‘Women's Secrets’ Among the Baganda.” *IDS Bulletin*. 37. 10.1111/j.1759-5436.2006.tb00308.x. (2009), 89 - 97.

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Mwansa, “Law, religion and human rights in Zambia: The past, present and the practice.” 8. (2008), 546-567.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MICROCOSM OF WOMEN

Women in Zambia are not all the same. Those I have interviewed can be placed on three points along the cultural spectrum. First are those who have overcome stereotypical limitations of women have risen to positions of leadership and prominence among men. Then come those who strive for equality with men but are hindered by lack of support or personal fortitude. Third, I have interacted with those who fully understand the cultural expectations of women and have embraced their subservient position. Among the third category are those who organize pre-marriage counseling for women in which they remind the brides of their solemn duty to serve their husbands. Such counseling has a premium placed upon it and a woman is made to believe that she would fail in her marriage without it. Moreover, refresher sessions are offered to women already in marriage but are deemed to be failing in their wifely duties of pleasing their husbands at all costs. Their alleged shortcomings can range from something as mundane as her posture while talking to her husband, to her lack of cooperation in his demands for intimacy. It is not unusual for a woman considered to be uncooperative in her marriage to be physically punished by the marriage counselors known as “Alangizi” (guides) to put her in her place.<sup>26</sup> Such punishment might include, but not limited to, pinching her inner thighs to the point of leaving permanent spotted scars. The idea is to create a vivid reminder of her position in marriage.

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<sup>26</sup> Although Alangizi are primarily traditional guides, they affect the way the Church deals with the roles of women in marriage. This is because most African women are traditional first and Christian second. Insisting on women being subservient to their husbands makes the practice of Alangizi welcome by the Church and widespread in society.

The most important interaction between the bride and Alangizi takes place on the night before the wedding when she is invited to the counseling hut or shelter. This meeting is preceded by a meal, after which the session begins. It typically involves drum beaters and dancers whose role is to initiate the woman into wifely duties using music, dance, and oral instructions. The primary duty she is instructed in while in the hut is how to satisfy her husband. This is done through the means of rhythmic drum beating and gyrating which is explicitly sexual in nature. This explains why the most demeaning question a husband asks his wife when she seems to come up short sexually is, “where you not taught?” The obvious question that non-Africans ask when told about this initiation is whether or not men go through their own. The answer is that they do, but not to the same extent and not with the same expectations.

### **THE RESEARCH SUMMARY**

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information from women across a wide spectrum of society, and their views on the project’s core purpose which is the advancement of women in the Church and society. The intended and realized outcome was the ascertainment of the women’s understanding of their roles in the Church, home and society.

The interview addressed four key questions:

1. How different was your growing up as a girl compared to your brother/s or male relatives or friends?
2. In what way was the way you were raised affect your self-esteem or sense of belonging?
3. In what way was how you grew up shape what you have become?
4. Are you a traditional woman, westernized or both? What is your view of the role of a woman in the Church, home and society?

The methodology of the interviews was a combination of phone calls, FaceTime, WhatsApp, Messenger, Email, and text messaging. The selection was based on recommendations by the conversation partners. In a few cases, the interviewees themselves recommended someone with a slightly different experience or views than theirs. The information collected was benign and presented negligible risk to the participants. Moreover, their responses were framed in a way that carefully masked their identity. The participants were comfortable sharing their experiences and views and no intimate or controversial questions were raised. Particular care was taken to ensure that criticism and dissension of Church policies were presented in a manner that did not expose the interviewees to potential disciplinary action.

### **A Political Operative**

This was my first interview. This woman typifies women who have reached the top of the top. But even she admits that the journey to equality is not without obstacles. She has also served as a member of parliament in the National Assembly which is equivalent to Congress in the United States. When I interviewed her concerning her career, she first addressed the obstacles. She attributed the first obstacle to tradition which strictly specifies the roles assigned to each gender. She admitted that the limited roles that women play in society are especially insisted on in the villages. She states, “It was very difficult in 1996 for me to convince the voters that I was as qualified to run as Member of Parliament as the male colleagues; that there is no law precluding a woman from participating in politics. In short you keep defending yourself throughout to be accepted or to make sense.” Moreover, she pointed out the fact that a woman has to put in twice as much effort as her male counterpart in order to prove herself as deserving of the task. While it is appreciative for a woman to be acknowledged for her accomplishments, this woman noted that, “When a man is appointed to any position, society never wonders, but

when a woman is appointed to a position of influence, people start to ask questions, most times they fail to see that the lady appointed is qualified.”

Another challenge to women’s progress as observed by this woman is that men use women to work against each other to advance the cause of male dominance. This has been true of most of her opponents in the political arena. “I was the first elected woman MP in Luapula Province since independence, and I became the first woman National Secretary of a political party in 30 years of its existence. In all these portfolios I have been fought more by women than men.”

I faced similar challenges as the ones raised by the political operative, in which some of the key women leaders of the Church voiced louder opposition to the essence of this project. They based their opposition on the notion of faithfulness to scripture even though it has been clearly established that the scriptures used are selective and prejudicially exegeted.

### **A Law Enforcement Officer**

This woman represents women who are competitive and can hold their own when it comes to work and life outside the home. She is a senior officer in the national police service. She is educated and a single Mother who does not need a man to provide for her material needs. Yet she confessed that she is open to marriage and is happy to be a traditional wife at home regardless of the position of her prospective husband. She finds value in a woman playing the role of homemaker. What I found most surprising about this woman is that she has tens of thousands of men under her charge. Yet when she gets married it is her husband who would take up leadership in the house. I teased her by asking what she would do if she happened to marry her subordinate at work. She responded with a chuckle and assured me that his salute would end

at the doorstep. I have shared more later about ways in which this woman is a great ally in support of our project.

### **The Human Resource Director**

This was another very successful woman whose career challenged expectations at home. Hers was a role reversal, taking on the roles that her husband once held. In the years past he had been the primary provider [bread winner as they call them in Zambia] but now the wife brought home the proverbial bacon. She never held her possession over him, but was concerned that she was being perceived that way. To compound matters, she was in the middle of her Ph. D studies with the potential to rise even higher. I asked her if she might be unintentionally coming across as superior, but she told me the only thing that changed about her was that she was spending more time at work given the breadth of her job description. Like the two women above, she is in support of this project.

### **The Divorced**

I interviewed a woman whose marriage had been on the rocks for a long time, but was encouraged to hang in there, as a divorce would be a blight on her extended family and arduous to process in the church. She was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. Attentive to these two factors, she did everything within her ability to keep the marriage going. But he was not interested in making the marriage work, nor was he willing to divorce. The status quo suited him as he was able to live a marriage life with the freedom of a single man. He did not have to worry about the stigma and expense of divorce. This created a dilemma for the wife as she could not proceed with divorce both legally and ecclesiastically without her husband's consent. It took four years and a stack of supporting documents for this woman to get the needed attention from the



authorities in the church and a subsequent annulment. In short, the man set the terms and timing of the divorce. This woman is also an ally in this project.

### **Stifled**

This woman was raised in a Christian home but strayed into youthful passions while in High School. This led her to a pregnancy and subsequent marriage at a young age. Although she had done everything possible to keep the marriage, her husband had other ideas and the marriage predictably ended. The experience of rebellion and a failed marriage ignited a passion for full time service in the Church. She enrolled into Bible College and was classmates with men. She was one of the high achieving students and was well considered by the faculty. However, hers was going to be a ministry that was strictly confined to women and children. The men that she had beaten in academics received calls in the Church and some in the administration of the denomination.

I asked her how she felt about spending over thirty years in ministry with the audience of only women and children when the materials she covered in Bible School would greatly benefit men in the Church. Her response was mixed. On the one hand, she felt fully prepared to serve in any capacity in the church. On the other hand, she fears letting the Church and God down by soliciting for or accepting positions which are explicitly for men according to the Bible. As it turns out, she has outlived most of her Bible College male peers and has acquired enough experience to be the next General Secretary of her denomination. The efforts and initiatives advanced in this project will make this possible soon. I have arranged to have the Global Mission office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to invite her and other willing women to a conference here in the United States where they will meet women in ministry and exchange some ideas.

## **Unusual**

This woman is one of the few women pastors in Zambia. Her calling, however, happened by accident. She was a devoted wife of a pastor and was content with the traditional role of helping her husband mostly behind the scenes. She was happy with the title of First Lady but admits that it did not mean much. Then her husband collapsed while conducting a worship service and died instantly. Following several days of mourning and the subsequent burial of the “Man of God” as they call the clergy in Zambia, the leaders in the Church felt that it was time to do things differently. They had noticed some gifts of preaching and leadership in the First Lady. These had happened during the times she was teaching the women of the Church. She had to be approached for a possible succession of her husband’s position.

It has been over twenty years since this woman took over the leadership of the Church and under her watch, the church has quadrupled in membership and sponsored new churches in the outlying areas of the city. Moreover, she has become internationally renowned and a regular speaker at global conferences. She is a poster woman for successful leadership in the Church.

## **Outcomes**

The participants provided the framework upon which the push for the advancement of women in the Church and society was established. All participants indicated a willingness to support the project, with varying degrees of involvement. Some carefully weighed the option of speaking to other women about their own experiences with the hopes of opening up avenues of dialogue. These participated in the execution of the strategy of conversation as stated in that section. Those who were against the advancement of women in the Church and society provided an insight into how best to present the case to other women with similar views.



CHAPTER FIVE  
JESUS, PAUL, AND WOMEN

**JESUS AND WOMEN**

As I stated before, the Bible has been used to support the traditional ways that elevate men over women. Therefore, taking another look at Bible stories and theologies that offer a different perspective gives us an opportunity to begin the process of allowing women to hold positions of leadership in the Church if they so qualify. The first place to go is the creation account as it is often used to argue for men's authority over women. We look at the relationship between Adam and Eve through the lenses of Jesus who quotes Genesis 2:24 in his response to the Pharisees' question as to whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause (Matthew 19).

The very premise of this question suggests a culture with bias against women. The Pharisees did not ask Jesus if it is lawful for a couple to divorce for any reason. Furthermore, they did not ask if it is lawful for a wife to divorce her husband for any reason. Jesus blows this bias out of the water when he quotes verbatim Genesis 2:24 and says, "Therefore a man shall leave his Father and his Mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."<sup>27</sup> In this response Jesus protects the woman by underlining her oneness with her husband. At the core of any marital relationship is the oneness established by two people from different walks of life and coming together in mutual agreement. Where some have used the Genesis account to establish male headship, Jesus underscores partnership. As if to guard against the temptation for

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<sup>27</sup> Biblehub.com ESV

man to assert authority, Jesus put the onus on man to leave his Father to join and become one flesh with and not head of his wife. Jesus further promotes his view of equality between men and women when he refuses to endorse the death sentence of a woman caught in adultery:

“The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.” (John 8:3-9)

It is not a secret that the Pharisees and scribes came from a patriarchal system and were therefore biased against this woman. It is equally not a secret that the Pharisees, scribes and many establishers of rules and regulations in biblical times were inconsistent at best and hypocrites at worst. It should therefore not surprise us that they used their patriarchal authority to suppress and oppress women as is the case here. Just so I can appreciate the motivation behind Jesus’ protection of this ‘sinful’ woman, he assigns 36 verses to the excoriation of the Pharisees and scribes, describing them as hypocrites who shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. He further lambasts them by saying, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” (Matthew 23:15 ESV). As Jesus stoops to write on the ground with his finger, he has in mind the following description of the despicable self-righteous men who have dragged a defenseless woman before him: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!” (Matthew

23:23-24 ESV). While the issues Jesus has with the Pharisees have to do with their treatment of people in general, he is mostly concerned about their suppression of women. These woes therefore serve as a warning to the modern day Pharisees who like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, pick and choose scripture to advance their bias against women in the Church.

The story of the encounter between Jesus and the woman of Samaria at the well, serves to underscore one more time his embrace of women, including those considered to be outsiders and of questionable reputation. While the disciples worry about the traditional and moral implications of this spectacle, Jesus sees a person and not just a woman. He sees her for who she is and not what gender she possesses. He sees her for who she is and not what tribe she belongs to. At the conclusion of the story, the woman holds a mass crusade that draws the entire town to Jesus. This is before Peter preaches to 3000 after Pentecost. This is before Billy Graham, Reinhard Bonke, Jimmy Swaggart, and other evangelists had a chance to preach to the masses. Obviously, Jesus approved of her ministry otherwise he would have told her not to tell anyone about their encounter. Jaime Clark-Soles in her devotional titled *The Nasty Woman Who Persisted: The Samaritan Woman of John 4 (John 4:5-42)* , sums up this encounter when she when she holds the disciples against the woman, "The Samaritan woman doesn't have time to stay and deal with their sexist notions; she has too much preaching to do to those in need of some good news. She is so effective in her work that people catch the vision and join it and then do their part to spread the vision. While she is working, the disciples are kerfuffling around. What she has sown, they will reap. She's building a foundation that they will, eventually, add to."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Jamie Clark-Soles, "The Nasty Woman Who Persisted: The Samaritan Woman of John 4 (John 4:5-42)." *Patheos*, March 14, 2017. <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/onscripture/2017/03/nasty-woman-persisted-samaritan-woman-john-4-john-45-42/>.

Discipleship by design is for the purpose of training followers to be like their master. Hence Jesus models for his disciples the way they are to treat women. Jesus saw the woman of Samaria as a person with a future that was strikingly different from her present. He saw in her the potential to lead a town into a spiritual revolution and did not stand in her way. The disciples were allowed front row seats to this revolutionary event in which a woman takes center stage and does what they have never done despite the proximity they have had to Jesus. Remember how they once failed to cast out demons? Remember how they jostled for positions in the kingdom? The woman has one thing on her mind — to bring people to Jesus. She has no time for the politics of gender. She sees no one with the copyright to the Gospel. Her spiritual achievement is summed up in the words of Marc Timmermans, “Clearly, what is at stake here is the fact that salvation is offered not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles. That is why Jesus is explicitly recognized as “indeed the Savior of the world” (4:42). And it is through the action of the woman, her initiative, and her testimony, that her fellow citizens start their journey of faith in Jesus. They represent the first fruits of the great eschatological harvest, the gathering of those who believe in Jesus (4:39: “Many of that town believed in him”).<sup>29</sup>

### PAUL AND WOMEN

The fair headline here should be “Paul and People”. But I have left it as it is for the sake of this paper. While Paul is the biblical figure most used to advance the argument against women holding positions of leadership in the Church, his connections, and interactions with women in the early Church merits a second view. Moreover, contrary to accusations of chauvinism as

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<sup>29</sup> Marc Timmermans, "Jesus and the Feminine Genius. The Anthropological Relevance of the Encounters of Jesus with Women in the Fourth Gospel." *Institut d'Études Théologiques* 23, no. 1 (2019), 5-29.  
<http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.mhp-91427937-160f-47fc-8f06-0e4597d41caf/c/3270-5303-1-PB.pdf>.

leveled by people like George Bernard Shaw, Paul had a balanced attitude towards women. Juros argues concerning the women around Paul, “Their equality with men was secured through baptism which, unlike circumcision, made it possible for women also to become members of the saved nation.”<sup>30</sup> The obvious place where this is underscored is in his letter to the Galatians 3:28-30 where he describes the radical difference that life in Christ makes: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”<sup>31</sup> This statement when held against a typical Jewish male who thanked God three times a day, because he was not a gentile or a woman, indicated strong support of women. While this radical statement has been interpreted in different ways both in support of women’s positions of leadership as well as in opposition, its implications are inescapable.

There is no difference in spiritual status between a man and woman, hence their positions should be determined by their gifting or qualifications and not their gender. Philip Barton Payne addresses Galatians 3 with careful and bold exegesis when he says, “This verse states an accomplished fact; in Christ, believers are one, as Jesus prayed in John 17:21 that they would be, with the result that the world will believe. Galatians 3:28 has been called the “Magna Carta of Humanity” since it affirms equality in Christ that transcends each of the three major social barriers to privilege.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> J. Juros, *Saint Paul and Women*. 66. (2011), 107-118.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.bible.com/59/gal.3.27-29.esv>

<sup>32</sup> Phillip Barton Payne, "Man And Woman, One In Christ : An Exegetical And Theological Study Of Paul’s Letters.." *VDOC PUB*, no. (): . April 17, 2021. <https://vdoc.pub/documents/man-and-woman-one-in-christ-an-exegetical-and-theological-study-of-pauls-letters-4s1hje11k950>.



I should feel confident about Payne's conclusions on Paul's view of men and women as he spent over thirty years in research about the topic of the equality of men and women including in the pulpit. Moreover, I cannot chalk Payne's work to some liberal pastor or teacher with a progressive agenda given his membership with the Evangelical Free Church and his work as professor of the New Testament.

### **Paul and Phoebe**

One does not need deep theological exposure to notice the obvious participation of women in all aspects of the early church. Concluding his letter to the Romans, Paul acknowledges several women whose partnership with him in ministry must not be relegated to mere behind the scenes logistical support. Theirs was full-fledged ministry in every sense. His attitude and position on Phoebe is emphasized in his letter to the Romans:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. Romans 16:1-6 ESV

What Paul says about Phoebe in particular reveals a lot about his stand on women and their ministry in the Church. Paul does not force Phoebe on the Romans nor does he reluctantly introduce her to them. He commends her. A commendation is a vote of confidence. It is a recognition of a rare accomplishment. Moreover, Paul is sure to let the Romans know that Phoebe's standing in the Church is one of a saint. This implies a sustained period of presence and service in the Church. Jen McNeel notes this in her article titled *Who Was Phoebe?* "Paul's words about her reveal to us 2,000 years later that women were playing crucial roles in the

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ministry of the early church. Phoebe is one of quite a few women that Paul mentions and commends for their leadership and service. When Paul writes about these women, nothing distinguishes their service from that of the men they worked alongside. They are all co-workers in the gospel.”<sup>33</sup>

Again, this argument fits in with both Paul and Jesus’ *modus operandi*. They saw women and men as partners in the advancement of the Gospel and were not hesitant to break the mold and form something out of character as far as tradition and culture were concerned. This should encourage us to take the necessary steps and begin to utilize the gifts of women to the fullest. Aryanto concurs as he sums up Phoebe’s partnership with Paul as follows, “As a benefactor, Phoebe is assumed as a person who has wealth, status and influence. She, thus, is in a good position to bring Paul’s letter to Rome. Paul has a strong reason to ask her favor because of her high status in the Christian community.”<sup>34</sup>

If Paul’s view of women were that they were of no leadership credentials across the board and in every generation, he would not have allowed Phoebe to play the role that she played in his ministry. Some might argue that women can play the role that Phoebe played to this day. What they forget is that when she was given the responsibility of being Paul’s emissary, she was essentially ordained to be his mouthpiece, hence she would have had to speak to both men and women in organized church settings.

## **Paul and Priscilla**

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<sup>33</sup> Jen McNeel, "Who Was Phoebe." *The Text In Context*, April 25, 2017. <http://thetextincontext.com/tag/phoebe/>.

<sup>34</sup> Antonius Galih Aryanto, “Phoebe: The Woman Deacon And Patron In Romans 16:1-2.” *DISKURSUS - JURNAL FILSAFAT DAN TEOLOGI STF DRIYARKARA* 17, no. 2 (October 15, 2018), 181–192. doi:10.36383/diskursus.v17i2.256.

Although Priscilla is rarely mentioned without her husband Aquila, her role in the establishment and management of the Church which they planted together is never one of subservience to him. This is echoed in Paul's acknowledgement of their partnership with him in the Gospel. At no time does Paul highlight Aquila more than he does Priscilla. Neither does he highlight Priscilla at the expense of Aquila. What this demonstrates is the equality with which Paul relates to them and how that equality is fully responsible for their success in ministry. That Priscilla is a model for strong biblical womanhood is portrayed by Hope Bolinger in her article: *Why Is Priscilla Significant in the Bible?* In her answer to this question, she says, "The Bible describes her as an equal to Aquila. She worked alongside her husband as a tentmaker, and the Bible does not focus on whether she was a mother or managed the household. She and her husband started a church together, and they continue to preach the Gospel late into Paul's ministry, and likely beyond after Paul is beheaded."<sup>35</sup>

Bollinger's observation of the expected roles that women played in biblical times applies fully to how women are viewed in traditional Africa. Unless stories like the one she tells about Priscilla are bravely told and used in support of women in the Church, their status is always second class to that of men. Moreover, using scripture like the one about Priscilla to counter the traditional roles of women in the Church is smart in that it lets the story tell itself. This is especially effective when one considers the fact that some of the resistance to allowing women to serve in positions of leadership is motivated by fear of being labeled liberal or progressive. No one wants to be accused of being liberal in the church traditions where conservatism is jealously

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<sup>35</sup> Hope Bolinger, "Why Is Priscilla Significant in the Bible?." *Crosswalk*, March 5, 2020. <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/why-is-priscilla-significant-in-the-bible.html>.

guarded. The story of Priscilla will therefore have to be judged as liberal if I use the typical standard. Hence the decision would have to be made as to whether to dismiss it, which would fly in the face of their embrace of Scripture as the inspired and inherent word of God.

## CHAPTER SIX

### LEARNING FROM THE AIC

The African Independent Church abbreviated as AIC is the name given to the churches in Africa which were established by Africans without any participation from the missionaries or people from other countries. The unique thing about the AIC is the preponderance of women in its leadership. The success with which the women leaders of the AIC warrant my examination and emulation as I acknowledge and apply the gifts of women in the conventional church.

#### **Christina Nku**

Understanding a brief history of the AIC helps us trace the movement whose success reveals the leadership skills that women at its center possess. One of the people at the center of the AIC is a woman named Christina Nku. She was the founder of St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission in South Africa. Her success in running this church has reverberated in literature and told through oral stories since the 70s. Born on a farm, Nku suffered poor health and like many women in the AIC, she saw visions, the combination of which set the stage for the establishment of St. John. It is noteworthy that the willingness to tap into the spiritual world makes women particularly successful in running the affairs of the Church.

Mookgo Solomon Kgatle's account of Nku's upbringing and it reflects on Park's writing, includes the fact that her life as a child astonished her parents. She was seldom found amid her peers. She attended school and went as far as standard three. She never was exposed to the outside world like her other sisters. From her childhood she kept indoors and was always found praying in dark corners of the house, so as not to be heard because she feared her Father. Since

1906, she has been seeing visions up to the time she was called to rest. She prophesied, healed the sick and founded a church.<sup>36</sup>

### **Alice Mulenga Lenshina**

Zambia has its fair share of the AIC. The Lumpa Church which was established by the woman named Alice Mulenga Lenshina has had its presence in Zambia since the 50's. Lenshina's origins are not that different from Nku's. It is believed that she was initially raised in the Catholic Church, but an illness coupled with a vision sent her on the trajectory that led to the founding of the Lumpa Church. The fact that this Church would grow from a few followers to tens of thousands demonstrate the power and influence that women can have on their followers. One of the ways you know how successful these women were is by how much opposition they faced from both the government and mainline church groups.

The Lumpa Church actively engaged in political actions against the colonial or post-colonial authorities. According to Katerina Mildnerova, "Violent confrontations of the Lumpa church devotees with the dominant nationalist party the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Kenneth Kaunda – led just after the independence (1964) to many massacres<sup>11</sup>, the ensuing exodus of many church members to neighbouring Congo. Consequently, the church was banned by the Zambian government."<sup>37</sup> I discuss the AIC not as an endorsement of their doctrine

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<sup>36</sup> Mookgo Solomon Kgatle, "A remarkable woman in African Independent Churches: Examining Christina Nku's leadership in St John's Apostolic Faith Mission." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 45(1), <https://dx.doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/3323> (2019), 1-14.

<sup>37</sup> Katerina Mildnerová, "African Independent Churches in Zambia (Lusaka)." *University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava Slovak Republic*. . March 10, 2021.  
[https://d1wqtxs1xzle7.cloudfront.net/37257913/AFRICAN\\_INDEPENDENT\\_CHURCHES\\_IN\\_ZAMBIA.rtf?1428588187=&response-content-disposition=attachment%3B+filename%3DAfrican\\_independent\\_churches\\_in\\_Zambia\\_L.doc&Expires=1625859497&Signature=AArEwejp1Uvm3kV3lEXips3PuSftcjLHZakT3TT8HVr7ALYpR4jZM4rxS8scYzhlFFBwpLjttl-HqrJ~Z9tmw7tTeYEzhA7NUuUVdiM1dnn4PkpJlOoG7o0IE5-IsPnFEtude4Enit28z5Noj1iE8b~N3aqUuFsU3vw9unN2SKyo8MEcjWhaC0~D5SBzpts2XrlAf73l-](https://d1wqtxs1xzle7.cloudfront.net/37257913/AFRICAN_INDEPENDENT_CHURCHES_IN_ZAMBIA.rtf?1428588187=&response-content-disposition=attachment%3B+filename%3DAfrican_independent_churches_in_Zambia_L.doc&Expires=1625859497&Signature=AArEwejp1Uvm3kV3lEXips3PuSftcjLHZakT3TT8HVr7ALYpR4jZM4rxS8scYzhlFFBwpLjttl-HqrJ~Z9tmw7tTeYEzhA7NUuUVdiM1dnn4PkpJlOoG7o0IE5-IsPnFEtude4Enit28z5Noj1iE8b~N3aqUuFsU3vw9unN2SKyo8MEcjWhaC0~D5SBzpts2XrlAf73l-)

or promotion of their movements, but as an example of what women can accomplish when they are allowed the opportunity to lead.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### BUILDING ALLIANCES

When I first conceived of this project, I thought that I would be one of the pioneers to argue for the full integration of women in the life of the Church in Zambia and the rest of Africa. That was before I had a chance to read about women who have fought the fight for integration and have excelled in leadership both in the Church and the secular establishment. In the next few pages, I am going to argue that women's contributions to the success of the church and society, speak for themselves and are beyond dispute. It is these arguments that have opened doors that lead to the possibility of moving the still resisting part of the Church into a phase where women are no longer to be seen and not heard, but as full participants in all ecclesiastical matters.

Leading the contingent of my allies in presenting the indisputable contributions of women in the Church is the late Rose Ampofo who was the director of the Presbyterian Women's Center in Ghana. Her brief life of only 54 years, established the legacy upon which my efforts to secure women's full participation in the life of the Church can be based. In her article on the contribution of women to Church growth and development, she argues, "A critical factor in the development of the African church in the past century and a half is that the majority of its adherents (namely the congregations) have been women. This situation is still evident."<sup>38</sup>

The truth that women do the heavy lifting in most aspects of life in Africa is not contested. As I already highlighted earlier in this paper, women are the first to wake up in the

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<sup>38</sup> Rose Ampofo, "The Contribution of Women to Church Growth and Development in Africa" *International Review of Mission*, 87: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1998.tb00082.x> (1988), 233-239.



morning and get the fire going. If the firewood needs replenishing, they proceed to the woods, returning after an hour or more with a bundle carefully balanced (hands free) on their head, a baby on their back and a squash or pumpkin in each hand. In that time, men are still sleeping and expect to find water warmed and ready for their bath. This sense of responsibility follows women wherever they go, including being first and available to respond to the need for volunteers at their children's school. The Church, of course, is no exception. Why this sense of responsibility by women matters is the essence of this project. As an ardent observer of my Mother when I was growing up, I can say without equivocation that it takes a thinking and planning mind to carry out everything that women do. As such, their qualifications for leadership even among men defy gender.

## **THE ALLIES**

This project cannot be undertaken by one or even few individuals. It calls for alliances between people of common interests or kindred spirit. While I was motivated to engage in this project because of the gifts of my Mother, there are other Zambians who know women who are just as gifted as my Mother and would like to see them excel in the Church. The list of actual and prospective allies is long. I have only highlighted those with greater and immediate impact.

### **Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu**

The nation of Zambia is fortunate to have a president who understands and appreciates the value of gender equality. President Lungu has demonstrated this by striving to balance his cabinet by dividing it by 50/50 along gender lines. Moreover, his Vice President is a woman. He is also a professing Christian who would be an important ally in this work. While addressing the traditional counselors referred to as Alangizi above as reported by Chris Phiri of *Zambian Reports*, the President said, "I have come across women who profess to be champions of gender

equality in public, in the evening when they have a chance to sit as family, leaders or as Alangizi, they begin telling young women that your place is in the kitchen, they begin telling their girls that you have no chance if you don't get married, they begin telling girls that a man is better than a woman, please stop it, you are embarrassing us.”<sup>39</sup>

As established already, the Zambian culture insists on showing respect to the leaders. No leader is more revered and admired than the president. To have him include church leaders in his admonition of marriage counselors puts me and my allies at an advantageous position as we remind the Church leaders of the president's desire to see gender equality across the board.

### **The ELCA**

The Reverend Leila Ortiz is the Bishop of the Metropolitan Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Before becoming a Lutheran pastor and subsequently Bishop, she was in a conservative Pentecostal church. Her testimony as a Bishop with this kind of background is useful to this project. Moreover, the testimonies of other pastoral colleagues in my Synod is being utilized.

The global ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is also engaged through its missionaries in the Central African region. The approach is one of mutual acknowledgment of cultural, ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences while highlighting the need for total utilization of the spiritual gifts of all people, particularly women. The top page of *The Women of The ELCA* magazine, states the group's Purpose Statement which supports our prospective long-term alliance:

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<sup>39</sup> Chris Phiri, "President Edgar Lungu Counsels Alangizi.." *Zambian Report* (Lusaka, Zambia), March 11, 2020. <https://zambiareports.com/2020/03/11/president-edgar-lungu-counsels-alangizi/>.

As a community of **women** created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the **world**.<sup>40</sup>

Based on the proven success of its women leaders, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has embarked on a robust campaign to empower women from other parts of the world. This is where the element of supporting one another as stated in the Purpose Statements comes from. Through its *Support International Women Leaders* program, the ELCA declares the primary function of the initiative as, “boldly investing in established and emerging **women** leaders from our global companion churches.”<sup>41</sup> The conversation as to how this fits into relationships with the non-Lutheran African women is ongoing. Zambia’s proximity to the main ELCA companion countries of Namibia and Tanzania makes new partnerships practical.

### **Peggy Mulambya Kasonde**

Although the United Church of Zambia was one of the few mainline churches to open up to the possibility of the ordination of women, it took them a while to elect a woman to the position of General Secretary of the denomination, the position that is equivalent to the presiding bishop. In 2010, while completing her Ph. D in South Africa, The Reverend Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde was recalled and elected to be the first woman to hold the position which was traditionally reserved for man.

Dr. Kabonde is an important ally to this cause because her election was, to a large extent, made necessary by the issues involved her two predecessors who were both male and neither of

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<sup>40</sup> [www.womenoftheelca.org](http://www.womenoftheelca.org)

<sup>41</sup> “Support International Women Leaders.” *ELCA.org*, [www.elca.org/internationalleaders](http://www.elca.org/internationalleaders).

whom was able to finish out their term. Of greater significance is the fact that the United Church of Zambia is the largest Protestant denomination in the country and Dr. Kabonde has proven herself able to lead several hundreds of thousands of members. Jim Cairney interviewed Dr. Kabonde and noted some of her accolades. She is a former chaplain to the University of Zambia and an executive member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and has completed her doctorate on Female Ordination in The United Church of Zambia. She has been a member of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians since its inception in 1989, and has worked to coordinate gender justice issues with the Council for World Mission (CWM) Africa region.<sup>42</sup>

### **Leaders of the Women's Guilds**

Most leaders of women's groups are aware of the boundaries set by the men in the church and are unwilling to cross or negotiate them. They have been afraid of violating scripture which is a sure way to be excommunicated from the Church. But deep down their hearts, many have a clear sense of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The words of Joel ring in their ears and they know without question that they are part of the "all flesh" upon whom God had promised to pour out His Spirit. They are willing to engage in what they hope to be a mutually respectful and beneficial dialogue with the leaders of the Church.

In conjunction with the leaders of the guilds such as The Justice for Widows and Orphan project, Women and Law in Southern Africa, Women for Change, Young Women's Christian Association, Zambia Alliance of Women, The National Women's Lobby, I have put together a bi-annual conference to orient women and Church leaders to the resources available to support

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<sup>42</sup> Jim Cairney, "Global Partner Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde." *Risking Faith Daring Hope*, July 24, 2018. <https://generalcouncil43.ca/news/global-partner-rev-dr-peggy-mulambya-kabonde>.

the advancement of women in all areas of societal life, while paying particular attention to the Church.

### **The Political Operative**

I covered my interview with a political operative earlier. Her transition from a woman who was once timid and under the shadow of men, to a colleague with them in parliament has been an illustration to highlight my cause. She admits that she initially felt intimidated and overwhelmed by the presence of men in her audience when she made her maiden speech, but things normalized after a short time and the affirmation of some of the men she had once been intimidated by, took her to the next level. Now she functions not as a woman leader but as a leader who just happens to be a woman.

### **The Police Officer**

I covered a senior Police Officer with tens of thousands of men and women under her command. Her healthy contrast between life at work and life at home, assuages the fear of the men who worry that a women in leadership outside the home would take over their cultural leadership in the house. This Police Officer's alliance with us helps us keep the pendulum from swinging to the extremes, something which risks us being accused of ultra-liberalism. She is every bit a leader at work as she is a traditional woman at home. With permission from the Director of the Victims Unit of the Zambia Police Service which is the department that oversees the affairs of women in trouble and also serves to advance the general welfare of women, the Police Officer is willing to take a much more direct and open role in this project. She will participate in the bi-annual forums that I have initiated in conjunction with civic leaders of women's groups.

### **The Human Resource Director**

The Human Resource Director has proven to be an invaluable spokesperson when dealing with men who are simply insecure and are afraid of losing their position of leadership to a woman. Her career success is organic and natural and she does not flaunt it before men. But that does not stop some from putting up a shield in defense of her presence. Her mastery of the subject matters in front of her and her articulation of them is inescapable. Moreover, she is an active Christian who is knowledgeable of both her denominational workings and the Bible. She is a qualified leader and a showcase to this project. This lady has already established contacts with the stakeholders in the women's groups through her consultancy. She has volunteered to join the team as a mobilizer and participant in the conversational sessions as well as conferences. She is a gifted speaker with a commanding knowledge of issues affecting women both in the Church and society.

### **The Divorced**

I discussed a woman whose marriage and divorce were negatively impacted by the teachings of the Church. Taking advantage of the traditional and ecclesiastical mandate of leadership, her ex-husband came and went as he pleased. She knew that her marriage was in trouble but confronting a man who saw himself as the supreme leader of the family proved futile. Moreover, tradition and the church suggested her endurance. When it became irrefutable that the marriage was going nowhere and separation ensued, she had a hill to climb as she had to prove to the church that the marriage was irretrievable. She wants the Church to take another look at the position of women both in the Church and at home. This is to spare other women from the misery she suffered for years. Her trauma has taken a while to ease and she is using her experience to help other women. Given the extent to which the Church betrayed this woman, she

has offered to be the living testimony in whatever setting I deem her helpful. Like our other allies, she has offered to participate in the forums, conferences, and has offered to do a video documentary chronicling her experience.

## **STRATEGY**

It would have been an exercise in futility if all I did was point out the injustice meted out on women without leading them into a new space where they can fully thrive. The purpose of having a strategy other than the obvious is to win, but doing so by deconstructing the past using the framework that women themselves provided. Faith Wambura Ngunjiri notes this ability when she writes about a study done on women's affairs, "One of the most important themes that emerged in this study and that contributed to holding together the three elements of the conceptual framework was the ability of the women to deconstruct history, culture, religion, leadership, and other social constructs, as described in chapter 14."<sup>43</sup> I have included several elements into our strategy.

### **Conversation**

The first step in our project centers on conversations with the stakeholders and other allies on the ground. Conversation is an art that is quickly being lost in society. I cannot expect to succeed in promoting the full integration of women in the life of the Church in Zambia without first engaging in conversation. Forcing matters is out of question. Africans by nature, tradition and decorum are conversational people. Through conversation, the deeply embraced

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<sup>43</sup> Faith Wambura Ngunjiri, "I Am Because We Are': Exploring Women's Leadership Under Ubuntu Worldview." *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 18, no. 2 (May 2016), 223–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422316641416>.

motto of “Ubuntu” is reinforced.<sup>44</sup> Thankfully, we have a model to follow and that is Jesus Christ. His ministry on earth was almost exclusively conversational. He engaged in a conversation with Peter and his brother Andrew on matters of fish before he introduced them to the new career of fishing for people. He had a conversation with Nicodemus before he talked about John 3:16. He had a conversation about water with the woman of Samaria before he referred to himself as the living water. He had a conversation with Zacchaeus, after which Zacchaeus paid restitution to the people he had defrauded through overtaxing. He had a conversation with the disciples before he told Peter about Petros, the truth upon which the Church would be established. His last conversation before he died was with a thief alongside of whom he was crucified.

If I am going to have conversations, I must be prepared to listen, and do so well. Good listening, however, does not just happen, it is cultivated and nurtured. Otherwise, my conversations are of little or no benefit at all. In my New Testament Greek lectures, I learned that dialogue is a compound word made from two: dia = through and logos = words. Dialogue is therefore the practice of engaging someone through words. This means only one person can speak at any given time. As such, the one not speaking has a duty to listen. Even though our desire is to see change happening in the church, I must be willing to listen to the people with the power to make that change happen. In his paper titled *The Importance of Dialogue and Tolerance in a Plural Society* Vladimir Bakrac offers us some wisdom, “Tolerance is the ability to listen to a man who has different opinion about the same thing, in order to discover contents in

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<sup>44</sup> Etymologically speaking “Ubuntu” means being human or humanity. The everyday use of the term serves as a reminder to all of the obligations each human being has to others. “We are because you are!”



his opinion, which could contribute to connection, approach, correction, complement and expression of opinions in a form that would satisfy both sides.”<sup>45</sup>

My allies and I have begun conversations with both individuals as well as groups. The individuals consist of people in leadership as well as the influencers. By influencers I mean people with charisma and the means to persuade others. This is especially helpful when we consider the fact that Africans in general tend to hold their leaders in esteem and are willing to follow their guidance. As stated earlier, the bi-annual conferences and other regular forums convened in collaboration with guilds, provides the platform this.

## **Study**

Engaging in study as part of the push for change is a wise thing to do. Through study I am able to gather other people’s thoughts on the subject and use them as extra weight on the scale of our argument. Study also leads us to precedent which in our case would include how Jesus dealt with women. In her writing on the *Hermeneutical Questions: The Ordination of Women in the Light of Biblical and Patristic Typology*

Frances Young leads us back to Jesus, “Understanding why and how women, once leaders in the Jesus movement and in the early church, were marginalized and scapegoated as Christianity became the state religion is crucial if women are to reclaim their rightful, equal place in the church today. Jesus’ message and practice were radically egalitarian in their day and constituted a social revolution that likely provoked his crucifixion.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Vladimir Bakrac, "The Importance of Dialogue and Tolerance in a Plural Society," *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research Articles*, European Center for Science Education and Research, vol. 2, January-A. (2015)

<sup>46</sup> Ian Jones, Janet Wootton, and Kirsty Thorpe, *Women and ordination in the Christian churches: international perspectives*. London: T & T Clark. <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=601503>. 2008.

As it has been established already, a proper understanding of scripture, theology, and culture, aids our push for change that is already enabling women to fully integrate into the church in Zambia. The study that I have conducted is in the form of literature and testimony. Literature such as the writings of Oduyoye and other female trailblazers has been engaged. Here is an example why Oduyoye and the Circle for which they are known is helpful to our work, “In the case of African women’s theology, at least, these two poles are intricately connected, for many of the issues which marginalize and restrict African women are deeply cultural....Their theology is not, primarily, a church theology, but a theology of the marketplace; yet still deeply rooted in Biblical insights and in African wisdom.”<sup>47</sup>

These issues require deep study and reflection to unpack. Of greater import is the role that the Bible is made to play in their reinforcement. Notice that I say, “made to play” and I do so intentionally. Through study, the motivation for twisting the Bible for masculine and patriarchal ends is confronted and addressed. Moreover I have been able to identify areas in which theology and culture have been intertwined and used to reinforce women’s subservience.

As already noted, the aspect of study in this quest will, once approved, receive a boost from the *Evangelical Lutheran Church’s Global Mission* division. By their own observation, leaders of the global mission conclude that, “Today, women represent 70 percent of the world’s population living in poverty and are often underserved by a lack of access to education and training.”<sup>48</sup> This is an opportunity for us to expand on the study part of our strategy.

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<sup>47</sup> Jack Thompson, <https://www.eupublishing.com/doi/pdfplus/10.3366/swc.2002.8.2.329>

<sup>48</sup> [www.elca.org/internationalleaders](http://www.elca.org/internationalleaders)

## Storytelling

Storytelling has been a useful tool in our work. There is something about a person sharing an experience that produces conviction and change. In traditional Africa, stories play an indispensable role in communication. Rarely is a topic covered or point made without the illustration of a story—real or folklore. In this project, the stories are of real people with real experiences in real churches. Written stories of people that lived in the past or from the Bible were engaged. Furthermore, the stories of the interviewees who are also employed as allies in our project were utilized. The World Council of Churches understands the strategy of storytelling as noted by Jonathan Kangwa in article, *Resilience and Equality in the Household of God: Peggy Mulambya Kabonde's Search for Justice*. "The WCC initiated a decade of Churches in solidarity with women (1988 to 1998) to promote the visibility of women in the Church. Using storytelling as a heuristic tool and in the spirit of the WCC's decade of Churches in solidarity with women, the present paper documents the life and work of the Rev. Dr. Peggy Mulambya Kabonde of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ)"<sup>49</sup>

As noted already when I listed the "divorced" among our allies, she has volunteered to tell her story in different forms including the conference and a documentary. Furthermore, the Director of Human Resource has volunteered to include storytelling in her presentations at conferences and forums. Additionally, I will tell my Mother's story to highlight the deficit that the church suffers when it stifles the gifts of women in her midst.

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<sup>49</sup> Jonathan Kangwa, "Resilience and Equality in the Household of God: Peggy Mulambya Kabonde's Search for Justice." *The Expository Times* 131, no. 8 (May 2020), 339–47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524619883180>.

## Prayer and Discernment

Prayer is at the center of every decision and action a Christian takes. Our efforts to advocate for the full integration of women in the life of the Church are based on a firm understanding that the Church is God's and He calls those who serve. As such, I ask him through prayer to lead and guide us. T. Greenway has written about *Spiritual disciplines and virtue formation: Examining the effects of intercessory prayer, moral intuitions, and theological orientation on generous behavior*. In the abstract for this work, he talks about the impact of prayer on important decisions, "Research has found that both moral intuitions and prayer have an effect on virtuous behavior, but their interaction remains under investigated. It may be that intercessory prayer is more effective in producing or enhancing virtuous behavior when performed by individuals who tend to be motivated by particular moral intuitions when making moral decisions."<sup>50</sup>

Our model in this project is Jesus Christ. His was a ministry of inclusion and he birthed it in prayer. In the Lord's Prayer, for example, Jesus covers praise and petitions. In the garden of Gethsemane, he shows us the need to fully rely on God for the confirmation of a decision and action.

As part of the planning phase for the first conference slated for the summer of 2022 (covid permitting), I have requested the leaders of the women's groups in our alliance to study and be ready to share their insights from Ruth Haley Bart's *Pursuing God Together*. I chose this book because it deals with a wholistic approach to matters that hinge on the decision-making

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<sup>50</sup> Tyler S. Greenway, "Spiritual Disciplines and Virtue Formation: Examining the Effects of Intercessory Prayer, Moral Intuitions, and Theological Orientation on Generous Behavior." N.p.: Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology, 2017.

process in the Church. I understand that some of the leaders on the team are not Christians, but the principles in the book can be applied to the secular arena.

## Conclusion

This project began as an act of redress of the deprivation by the male leaders of the use of gifts by my Mother and other women in the church. It seemed to be a straightforward mission with a simple but profound aim. At its conclusion, however, several things have presented themselves as opportunities for clarity and goodwill on both sides of the argument. They include clarity of thought when arguing the case. This is because in the process of the project, issues that seem straightforward and beyond dispute, were not so. By listening to the other side of the argument, those issues provoked clarity of my argument. Moreover, understanding the justification and origins of the practice that suppresses women in the church has led to a stronger position on my part. As is often the case, people argue for or against something without clearly understanding the details involved.

While the journey is long, the steps I have taken have led us to the starting point with the assurance that gifted women in the church in Zambia and other parts of Africa will not be denied full use of their spiritual gifts purely on the basis of their gender. I have engaged the biblical arguments used against equality and found them to be selectively and carefully chosen to advance a pre-existing cultural position of the superiority of men over women. Furthermore, I have presented the blessings enjoyed by those who have already overcome inequalities as women with gifts in their midst have excelled in using them.

Most exciting are the new partnerships between the church in the West and Africa as we embark on the new paradigm for mission. Unlike the first time when the missionaries presented the Gospel in ways that reinforced unequal status between men and women, this time my allies and I are approaching missions with the understanding that the promise God made to pour His

Spirit upon all flesh is literal and calls for the recognition of everyone God has called as deserving of the platform to fulfill that calling.

The most exciting thing about this project is the opportunity it offers the Church in the USA where women are increasingly allowed to fully participate in the life of the Church to partner with the Church in Zambia as it begins the slow but steady journey of acknowledging and applying the gifts of its women in the Church. This is a chance for the new paradigm in mission that is different from the first time missionaries went over to Africa. This time, the partnership is mutual and based on a courageous understanding of God's inclusive grace.

As we continue this journey, we do so with a clear understanding of ongoing commitments that include conversation, study, storytelling, prayer and friendships regardless of the side of the argument. We understand that this is not a matter of salvation, therefore it is not a deal breaker. However, we also take seriously the consequences of injustices in the body of Christ. For the Glory of God and the greater good of His beloved community.

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